

Roberto Saviano

Roberto Saviano (Italian: [roˈbɛrto saˈvjaːno]; Naples, September 22, 1979) is an Italian journalist, writer and essayist. In his writings, including articles and his book *Gomorrah* (his debut novel that brought him fame), he uses literature and investigative reporting to tell of the economic reality of the territory and business of the Camorra crime syndicate and of organized crime more generally.

After the first death threats of 2006 made by the Casalese clan, a cartel of the Camorra, which he denounced in his exposé and in the piazza of Casal di Principe during a demonstration in defense of legality,^[1] Roberto Saviano was put under a strict security protocol. Since October 13, 2006, he has lived under police protection.^[2]

He has collaborated with numerous important Italian and international newspapers. Currently he writes for the Italian publications *l'Espresso*, *la Repubblica* and *The Post Internazionale*.^[3] Internationally, he collaborates in the United States with *The Washington Post*,^[4] *The New York Times*,^[5] and *Time*,^[6] in Spain with *El Pais*,^[7] in Germany with *Die Zeit*^[8] and *Der Spiegel*,^[9] in Sweden with *Expressen*,^[10] and in the United Kingdom with *The Times*^[11] and *The Guardian*.^[12]

His courageous positions have drawn praise from many important writers and other cultural figures, such as Umberto Eco.^[13]

In 2015 he launched his own editorial project, RSO - Roberto Saviano Online.

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Roberto Saviano



Born	September 22, 1979 Naples, Italy
Occupation	Writer, journalist, essayist
Nationality	Italian
Period	2000–present
Notable works	<i>Gomorrah</i> , <i>ZeroZeroZero</i>

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Biography

Son of Luigi Saviano, a Neapolitan doctor, and Miriam Haftar, a Ligurian of Jewish origins,^{[14][15][16]} Roberto Saviano received his high school diploma from the State Scientific High School "Armando Diaz" and then graduated in Philosophy from the University of Naples Federico II, where he was the student of historian Francesco Barbagallo.^[17] He began his career in journalism in 2002, writing for numerous magazines and daily papers, including *Pulp*, *Diario*, *Sud*, *Il manifesto*, the website *Nazione Indiana*, and for the Camorra monitoring unit of the *Corriere del Mezzogiorno*. His articles at the time are already important enough to spur judicial authorities at the beginning of 2005 to listen to him regarding organized crime.^[18] In the periodical '*Roberto Saviano*' published by Feltrinelli (publisher), Saviano published a piece dedicated to Enzo Baldoni in which he declares, among other things, "I am an atheist."

In March 2006, he published *Gomorrah*, a novel inspired by real situations. He is the author, along with Mario Gelardi, of a theatrical work of the same name and is a screenwriter for *Gomorrah (film)*, the movie drawn from his novel.^[19] On December 10, 2009, in the presence of Nobel Prize winner Dario Fo, Saviano received the title of Honorary Member of the Academy of Fine Arts of Brera and the Second Level Academic Diploma Honoris Causa in Communication and Art Education, which is the maximum degree given by the university. Saviano dedicated the awards to the southerners in Milan. On January 22, 2011, the University of Genoa awarded him a bachelor's degree *honoris causa* in law "for the important contribution to the fight against crime and to the defense of legality in our country". Saviano dedicated the honor to the judges of Milan's district attorney office who were investigating *Rubygate*. This led to the controversy with Marina Berlusconi, daughter of Silvio Berlusconi and president of the publishing house Arnoldo Mondadori Editore.^{[20][21]}

Saviano is primarily influenced by the southern Italian intellectuals such as Giustino Fortunato, Gaetano Salvemini,^[22] by the anarchists Errico Malatesta and Mikhail Bakunin, and by the poet Rocco Scotellaro. Additionally, he has said that his educational background includes "many authors recognized by traditional and conservative culture as Ernst Jünger, Ezra Pound, Louis Ferdinand Celine, Carl Schmitt and Julius Evola, whom he often reads.^{[23][24]} The latter affirmation caused

Vincenzo Consolo to angrily retract his planned introduction to *La parola contro la camorra*.

In 2015, Roberto Saviano collaborated with the Neapolitan playwright Mimmo Borrelli in the play *Sanghenapule – Vita straordinaria di San Gennaro*, which was part of the 2015/2016 season of the Piccolo Teatro of Milan.

In 2006, following the success of the non-fiction *Gomorrah*, which denounces the activities of the Camorra, Saviano received ominous threats. These have been confirmed by police informants and reports that have revealed attempts on Saviano's life, by the Casalesi clan. Investigators have claimed the Camorra selected Casalesi clan boss Giuseppe Setola to kill Saviano over the book, although the alleged hit never occurred.

After the Neapolitan Police investigations, the Italian Minister for Interior Affairs Giuliano Amato assigned a personal bodyguard and transferred Saviano from Naples. In autumn 2008, the informant Carmine Schiavone, cousin of the imprisoned Casalesi clan boss Francesco Schiavone, revealed to the authorities that the clan had planned to eliminate Saviano and his police escort by Christmas on the motorway between Rome and Naples with a bomb; in the same period, Saviano announced his intention to leave Italy, in order to stop having to live as a convict and reclaim his life.

On October 20, 2008, six Nobel Prize-awarded authors and intellectuals (Orhan Pamuk, Dario Fo, Rita Levi-Montalcini, Desmond Tutu, Günter Grass, and Mikhail Gorbachev) published an article saying that they side with Saviano against Camorra, and they think that Camorra is not just a problem of security and public order, but also a democratic one. They also think that the Italian government must protect his life, and help Saviano in having a normal life. Signatures were collected on the web site of the Italian newspaper *La Repubblica*.^[25]

Saviano contributed an op-ed piece to the January 24, 2010 issue of the *New York Times* entitled, "Italy's African Heroes". He wrote about the January 2010 riots between African immigrants and Italians in Rosarno, a town in Calabria. Saviano suggests that the Africans' rioting was more of a response to their exploitation by the 'Ndrangheta, or Calabrian mafia, than to the hostility of Italians.

In November 2010, he hosted, along with Fabio Fazio, the Italian television program "*Vieni via con me*", which was broadcast over four weeks by Rai 3.

His book *ZeroZeroZero*, was published by Feltrinelli in 2013, and the English translation was published by Penguin Random House in July, 2015. This book is a study of the business around the drug cocaine, covering its movement across continents and the role of drug money in international finance.

Gomorrah

"It's my reader who bothers criminal organizations, it's not me. My reader is what they don't want. The fact that, in this moment, we are talking about it, that all the newspapers talked about it, that books continue to be published, and that documentaries continue to come out is what they don't want; they don't want attention on themselves, on their names, and, above all, on their businesses." (Roberto Saviano on his book Gomorrah)

"In the Camorra system murder is necessary; it's like depositing money in the bank, purchasing a franchise, or breaking off a friendship. [...] But killing a priest, one outside the dynamic of power, pricks your conscience."

"Gomorrah (book)"

"I know and I can prove it. I know how economies originate and where their smell comes from. The smell of success and victory. I know what sweats of profit. I know. And the truth of the word takes no prisoners because it devours everything and turns everything into evidence. It doesn't need to drag in cross-checks or launch investigations. It observes, considers, looks, listens. It knows. It does not condemn to prison and the witnesses do not retract their statements. No one repents. I know and I can prove it. I know where the pages of the economy manuals vanish, their fractals mutating into materials, things, iron, time, and contracts. I know. The proofs are not concealed in some flash drive buried underground. I don't have compromising videos hidden in a garage in some inaccessible mountain village. Nor do I possess copies of secret service documents. The proofs are irrefutable because they are partial, recorded with my eyes, recounted with words, and tempered with emotions that have echoed off iron and wood. I see, hear, look, talk, and in this way I testify, an ugly word that can still be useful when it whispers, "It's not true," in the ear of those who listen to the rhyming lullabies of power. The truth is partial; after all, if it could be reduced to an objective formula, it would be chemistry. I know and I can prove it. And so I tell. About these truths."

(Roberto Saviano, Gomorra, translated by Virginia Jewiss)



Roberto Saviano in 2011.

Saviano began "with a story imitating Tommaso Landolfi and sent it to Goffredo Fofi, who made it clear that, although he wrote well for his age, he was writing 'crap.' 'The postmark told me where you're from,' he told him, 'write about your area.'" Saviano owes a lot to writers like Fofi and Gustaw Herling-Grudziński, writers whom he defines as "fighters," or masters who use the pen as a weapon.^[26]

In March 2006, his first book, Gomorra: A Personal Journey into the Violent International Empire of Naples' Organized Crime System, was published as part of Mondadori's Strade Blu series. It is a journey into the business and criminal world of the Camorra and of the places where the organization was born and lives:^[27] the region of Campania, the city of Naples, the towns of Casal di Principe, San Cipriano d'Aversa, and the territory around Aversa known as the *agro aversano*. Having grown up there, the author introduces the reader to a reality that is unknown to outsiders. The book talks about criminal bosses' sumptuous villas copied from Hollywood films; rural lands filled with the toxic waste of half of Europe; a population that not only cohabitates with this organized crime but even protects it and approves of its actions. Therefore, the author writes about a System (this is the real name used to refer to the Camorra)^[28] that attracts new recruits before adolescence, making them believe that theirs is the only possible life choice; about baby-bosses who are convinced that the only way to die like a real man is to be killed; and about a criminal phenomenon influenced by media spectacle, in which bosses base their clothes and movements on film stars.

As of August 2009, the book had sold 2.5 million copies in Italy alone and was translated in 52 countries. In the rest of the world, about 2 million copies of Gomorra were sold. It was present in the bestseller lists in Germany, the Netherlands, Belgium, France, Sweden, Finland, Lithuania, Albania, Israel, Lebanon and Austria.

A stage show was based on Gomorra, which earned Saviano the best actor of a new Italian play at the Olimpici del Teatro/Theater Olympics in 2008. A film of the same name, Gomorra, directed by Matteo Garrone, was also based on the book; it won the prestigious Grand Prix at the Cannes Film Festival in 2008.^[29] In 2009 the film won the Tonino Guerra Prize for best script at the Bari International Film Festival (BIF&ST).

Later on, a television show titled Gomorra (TV series) was produced by Sky Italia, Fandango, Cattleya, Beta Film and LA7, under the supervision of Saviano and the direction of Stefano Sollima (previously the director of the acclaimed series *Romanzo criminale*), Francesca Comencini, and Claudio Cupellini. The series, composed of twelve episodes, aired on the channel Sky Atlantica starting on May 6, 2014, and was then broadcast on Rai 3 on Saturdays in the late evening in January and February 2015. After the first season's success, production for the second season was announced; filming began in April 2015.^[30]

In 2016, filming, under the same directors and producers, of the adaptation of Zero Zero Zero, another novel by Saviano published in Italian in 2013, will begin.

The novel-essay

“Annalisa Durante, killed by crossfire in the Forcella neighborhood of Naples on March 27, 2004, at fourteen years old. Fourteen years old. Fourteen years old. Repeating it is like rubbing a sponge of ice-cold water along your back.” (Roberto Saviano comments on the death of a young girl)

“Around here keeping your mouth shut is not the simple, silent omertà of lowered hats and eyes. Here the prevailing attitude is “It’s not my problem.” But that’s not all. [...] The word becomes a shout. A loud and piercing cry hurled at bulletproof glass in hopes of making it shatter.” (*Gomorra*, translation by Virginia Jewiss)

The structure of the fictionalized essay (or the novel-essay or the investigative novel or the nonfiction novel) is nothing new, and was already used in narratives of denunciation in the nineteenth century. To give an example from the Neapolitan context, Francesco Mastriani—prolific Neapolitan storyteller of so-called low Romanticism—successfully experimented with the structure in his serial novels. His growing success, his increasingly direct relationship with readers, and the end of Bourbon rule and censorship led him to use a more objective narrative in the style of news reporting that was taken from the environments of sordid characters and criminals (the *dangerous classes*). Specifically, Mastriani methodically described and classified the criminal society of his time, as well as the problems of Naples and the South, giving rise to the Southern Question. The writer defined these works *studies* in the same narrative thread that was then in vogue in novels from European metropolises across the Alps and the Channel. Morbid curiosity and a chronic thirst for truth among readers caused such novels to become bestsellers. In *I vermi* (or *The Worms* about “social worms”), Mastriani examines, among others, *The Elegant Camorra*, *The Vagabonds* and *The Forced Labor*. As Benedetto Croce noted, Mastriani was widely read by the Neapolitan populace outside of the “learned and cultured” circles.

In the second half of the twentieth century, the work of Leonardo Sciascia and Italo Calvino offers examples of contamination and *hybridism* with the commingling of narrative and nonfiction. Sciascia’s literary production represents an emblematic case, above all with *The Knight and Death* in which allegorical, satirical and non-fiction elements combine in the detective story.

Italo Calvino’s *La giornata di uno scrutatore* (*The Watcher*) mixes the critical essay with the short story.

Threats and life under police protection

The success of his book created numerous problems for Saviano, starting with threatening letters, silent phone calls, and, above all, a sort of environmental isolation.

During a demonstration for legality in Casal di Principe on September 23, 2006, the writer denounced the business of the bosses of the Casalese clan: Francesco Bidognetti, Francesco Schiavone (currently in prison), and the two ruling bosses at the time, Antonio Iovine and Michele Zagaria. He addressed them in fiery tones ("You are not from this land! Quit being part of this land!") and invited residents to rebel. Because of the threats and intimidations Saviano endured, the then Minister of the Interior, Giuliano Amato, decided to assign police protection to the writer beginning on October 13, 2006. (Saviano was returning from Pordenone where he had been promoting *Gomorrah*).

On March 14, 2008, during the Spartacus Trial, the attorney for Casalese bosses Francesco Bidognetti and Antonio Iovine, Michele Santonastaso (assisted by Carmine D'Aniello), read a letter written jointly by Bidognetti and Iovine (while both were in prison) to the president of the First Section of the Appellate Court of Assizes, Raimondo Romeres. The letter contained a request to move the trial due to *legittima suspicione*, or doubt surrounding the impartiality of the judicial body, caused by the alleged influence of Roberto Saviano, Rosaria Capacchione and the district attorneys Federico Cafiero de Raho and Raffaele Cantone on the judges.^[31] Following the letter, the Minister of the Interior decided to strengthen the security measures for the writer, increasing his police escort from three to five men. The bosses, Francesco Bidognetti and Antonio Iovine, and their attorneys, Michele Santonastaso and Carmine D'Aniello, were charged with intimidation for "mafia purposes" of Saviano and Capacchione (the case against the alleged threats of the magistrates were taken up in Rome). Before the third criminal section of the Court of Naples, the Assistant Prosecutor of the District Anti-Mafia Directorate (DDA), Antonello Ardituro, requested conviction: one year and six months of prison, the maximum sentence, for boss Francesco Bidognetti and attorneys Michele Santonastaso and Carmine D'Aniello. (Acquittal due to insufficient proof was requested for the other boss, Antonio Iovine). The attorney general for Reggio Calabria, Federico Cafiero de Raho, testified during the trial that Saviano was a "mortal enemy of the clan" and recalled that Saviano was among the few journalists present at all 52 of the prosecutor's closing speeches for the Spartacus Trial.



Roberto Saviano during a Rai 3 television program.

On October 14, 2008, there is news of a possible assassination attempt on Roberto Saviano. A police inspector of the Anti-Mafia Investigation Department (DIA) of Milan informed the District Anti-Mafia Directorate (DDA) that the pentito, Carmine Schiavone (cousin of boss Francesco Schiavone, aka Sandokan), had informed him of a plan, already in operation, to kill the writer and his bodyguards before Christmas through a spectacular attack on the highway between Rome and Naples^[32] in the style of Capaci. Yet, when interrogated by magistrates, Carmine Schiavone denied knowing about a plan hatched by the Casalesi to kill Saviano, provoking the writer's immediate response: "It's obvious that he'd say this; if he were to talk [about the plan], it would mean implicitly admitting to still having connections with organized crime". In the end the district attorney heading the investigation requested and obtained dismissal of the case after the news was revealed to be unfounded. Carmine Schiavone denied knowing anything about the attack but confirmed that Saviano was condemned to death by the Casalese clan.^[33]

In October 2008, Roberto Saviano decided to leave Italy "at least for some time and then we'll see",^[34] also as a result of threats, which were confirmed by reports and statements from informants, revealing the Casalese clan's plan to eliminate him .

"I believe I have the right to a break. Over the years I have thought that giving in to the temptation to retreat was neither a very good idea nor, above all, an intelligent one. I believed that it was rather stupid—in additional to being improper—to give up, to bend to men who are nothing, people whom you abhor for what they think, for how they act, for how they live, and for their very being. But, in this moment, I don't see any reason why I should insist on living in this way, as a prisoner of myself, of my book, of my success. Fuck success. I want a life. That's it. I want a house. I want to fall in love, to drink a beer in public, to go to a bookstore and to choose a book by reading the cover. I want to go for a stroll, to sunbathe, to walk under the rain, to meet people without fear and without frightening my mother. I want to be surrounded by my friends, to be able to laugh, and to not have to talk about myself, always about myself as though I were terminally ill and they were struggling with a boring, yet inevitable, visit. Damn it, I'm only twenty-eight years old! And I still want to write, write, write because it's my passion and my resistance. And in order to write, I need to plunge my hands into reality, to cover myself in it, to smell its odor and its sweat, and to not live quarantined in a hyperbolic chamber inside military barracks—today here, tomorrow two hundred kilometers away, moved like a package without knowing what happened and what can happen. A perennial state of bewilderment and insecurity keeps me from thinking, reflecting, concentrating on what I have to do. Sometimes I surprise myself thinking these words: I want my life back. I silently repeat them, one by one, to myself."^[35] (Roberto Saviano)

The appeal from Nobel Prize winners

"People unfamiliar with Camorra power dynamics often think that killing an innocent person is a naive gesture on the part of the clans because it only legitimizes and amplifies the victim's example and words, a confirmation of the truths he spoke. Wrong. That's never the way it is. As soon as you die in the land of the Camorra, you're enshrouded in countless suspicions, and innocence is a distant hypothesis, the last one imaginable. You are guilty until proven innocent. In the land of the Camorra, the theory of modern rights is turned on its head." (Roberto Saviano, *Gomorra*, translated by Virginia Jewiss).

On October 20, 2008, six international Nobel Prize winners rallied in support of Roberto Saviano,^[36] asking the Italian government to do something to protect him and to defeat the Camorra and emphasizing the fact that organized crime is not merely a problem for police that only concerns the writer, but is a problem for democracy that concerns all free citizens. The appeal of the six Nobel laureates concludes that these citizens cannot tolerate the fact that the events described in Saviano's book are taking place in 2008 in Europe, just as they can't tolerate that the price one pays for denouncing these events means losing one's freedom and safety. The six Nobel Prize winners who launched the appeal are Dario Fo, Mikhail Gorbachev, Günter Grass, Rita Levi-Montalcini, Orhan Pamuk and Desmond Tutu.

The appeal was signed by writers such as Jonathan Franzen, Javier Marías, Jonathan Safran Foer, Jonathan Lethem, Martin Amis, Chuck Palahniuk, Nathan Englander, Ian McEwan, Hans Magnus Enzensberger, José Saramago, Elfriede Jelinek, Wisława Szymborska, Betty Williams, Lech Wałęsa, Paul Auster, Siri Hustvedt, Peter Schneider, Colum McCann, Patrick McGrath, Cathleen Shine, Junot Diaz, Tahar Ben Jelloun, Taslima Nasreen, Caro Llewelyn, Ingrid Betancourt, Adam Michnik and Claudio Magris. Foreign media—from El Pais to Le Nouvel Observateur and from Courrier International to Al Arabiya and CNN—also spread the initiative.^[37]

After the initiative, various radio stations opened their microphones to debates and comments on the subject. The program Fahrenheit on Italy's Rai Radio 3 organized a marathon reading of *Gomorra* in which celebrities from the world of culture, news, theater, and civil society participated. Numerous Italian cities also offered honorary citizenship to the writer, while many schools subscribed to the appeal. The Casa della Memoria e della Storia ("House of Memory and History") in Rome hosted an eight-hour choral reading of *Gomorra*.

In addition to the signatures of the six prominent figures, normal citizens were able to sign the appeal on a special page created by the newspaper *La Repubblica*. More than 250,000 signatures were collected.

Detailed Analysis

Need for bodyguards

In October 2009, the head of the Rapid Response Team of Naples, Vittorio Pisani, questioned the need for a security detail to protect Roberto Saviano,^[38] maintaining that the death threats had not been confirmed. In 2008 the director Pasquale Squitieri also cast doubt on the appropriateness of the security detail. According to him, Saviano went to the Cannes Film Festival “probably to put on a bit of a show” and “those who are really targets have body guards, of course, but they are also prohibited from flying on [commercial] planes and frequenting public places because they could put themselves and others in danger.”^[39] Squitieri’s declarations triggered a controversy between the two of them,^[40] and the producer of the film *Gomorrah*, Domenico Procacci, intervened, calling Squitieri’s declarations “despicable.”

The head of police, Antonio Manganelli replied by reaffirming the need for bodyguards.^[41] Furthermore, the head DA for the Anti-Mafia Office of Naples, Federico Cafiero de Raho, declared that Saviano is exposed to a high risk and, therefore, requires protection . The district attorneys Raffaele Cantone and Franco Roberti, both magistrates with years of experience on the front lines fighting against the clans, reiterated Roberto Saviano’s dangerous situation. The journalist Giuseppe D’Avanzo wrote a piece for *La Repubblica* requesting the resignation of the head of the Rapid Response Team for his declarations.

Roberto Saviano replied in an article for *La Repubblica*, denouncing the attempt to isolate him and to cause the “disintegration” of the public’s solidarity with him, comparing his case with those of Peppino Impastato, Giuseppe Fava, and Giancarlo Siani. Following Pisani’s initiatives, Saviano had to “*exhibit, as requested, the real cause of the threats.*”^[42]

On May 19, 2014, the ex-head of the Rapid Response Team of Naples, Vittorio Pisani, testifying during the trial of the Casalesi bosses and their lawyers, who had used an *istanza di remissione* to threaten Saviano and others in the courtroom, renounced the headline of the interview that he had given to the *Corriere della Sera* in 2009: *Saviano should not have bodyguards*. “I don’t agree with the headline of that article,” Pisani declared to the judges. He also clarified the content of the investigation his team had conducted on the threats to Saviano: “We investigated and showed some photos to Saviano, who, however, did not identify them as the people who had threatened him. The decision to assign a security detail was obviously not up to us. Pisani, therefore, explained that he did not say the words pronounced in the article since the Carabinieri (Italy’s national military police) were the ones who had to make the decision concerning Saviano’s security detail.”^[43]

Cesare Battisti

In 2004 the internet site Carmilla Online collected signatures in support of the ex-terrorist member of PAC (Armed Proletarians for Communism), Cesare Battisti, who had become a writer and was then hiding in France and Brazil. They collected more than 1,500 signatures from the political-cultural arenas of France and Italy.^[44] Roberto Saviano’s signature also appeared on the document, but in January 2009, he retracted his signature in respect for the victims. This petition attracted media attention thanks to the interest of the weekly magazine *Panorama*.^[45]^[46]

Declarations on Israel

During the demonstration *For Truth, for Israel*, organized by representative Fiamma Nirenstein of the PdL and held in Rome on October 7, 2010, Saviano participated through a video message, praising the Hebrew state as a place of freedom and civilization. In his speech, the writer spoke of his Jewish roots and declared that Israel is a “democracy under siege,” Tel Aviv is “a hospitable city” “that never sleeps, is full of life and, above all, tolerance, a city that succeeds more than any other in welcoming the gay community” and that “the refugees of Darfur, for example, are welcomed in Israel.”^[47]

These along with other declarations caused controversy and were criticized for having ignored the injustices suffered by the Palestinian population.^[48] The activist Vittorio Arrigoni responded to Saviano’s affirmations through a video, inviting him to revise his opinions and to define Shimon Peres—commended by Saviano—as a “war criminal.”

Caterina Donattini, an activist working in a Palestinian refugee camp, made similar criticisms, writing in a letter to Saviano that the Israeli-Palestinian question includes aspects of “a colonial project that has many similarities with that of Apartheid South Africa” and “has transformed a country into Swiss cheese.” She added that even some Jewish historians, such as Ilan Pappé, Avi Shlaim, and Benny Morris, have documented this fact.^[49]

Saviano responded to the objections by saying “In the video reduced to bare bones I never supported the war, never supported Operation Cast Lead, or the Israeli Right, never Netanyahu. I spoke about another Israel, an Israel to which one may turn in order to obtain peace.” Referring to the writer, Arrigoni, he replied, “In response to the question of are you with the Palestinians or the Israelis, I may disappoint, but I will always respond how my friend David Grossman taught me: ‘I am with peace.’”^[50]

Article on Benedetto Croce

Saviano was accused by the granddaughter of Benedetto Croce, Marta Herling, of having written a dishonest article about the Abruzzese philosopher. The writer affirmed that during the 1883 earthquake of Casamicciola in which he lost his parents and sister, Croce allegedly followed his dying father’s advice and offered 100,000 lire (a very large sum for the time) to whoever helped him out from under the rubble. The testimony taken up by Saviano during the show *Vieni via con me* (*Come away with me*) in 2010, was denied by Herling in a letter published in the Corriere del Mezzogiorno and in two interviews given to TG1, during which she explicitly maintained that the writer invented the episode.

Such a theory, according to the director of the *Corriere del Mezzogiorno*, Marco Demarco, came from an “anonymous source” reported by Ugo Pirro in the magazine *Oggi* in 1950. Actually, two detailed sources document the episode described by Saviano. A later and better known one is by Carlo del Balzo who describes the tragedy suffered by the Croce family in a book published shortly after the event: *Cronaca del Tremuoto di Casamicciola (Report on the Casamicciola Earthquake)* (Naples: Carluccio, De Blasio & Co., 1883). Nevertheless, there is also a previous book drawn on by Carlo del Balzo. It’s called *Ricordi. Casamicciola e le sue rovine. Cenni storici – Geografici – Cronologici (Memories. Casamicciola and its ruins. Historical – Geographic – Chronological Accounts)* (Naples: Prete, 1883.). The passage taken by del Balzo is the following:

“And at Casamicciola the son of Comm. Croce was dug out alive. He is the only survivor of the rich family from Foggia, which has been settled in Naples for a long time. He recounted that his mother and sister were found among the rubble and passed away. His father, who was writing with his son at the table when the quake struck, was completely covered by debris except for his head and told him – Offer 100 thousand lire to whoever can save us. – And then his voice could no longer be

heard and he was completely buried. The young Croce had a fractured arm and leg.”

A legal complaint between Roberto Saviano and TG1 resulted from this affair since TG1 had interviewed Marta Herling, who maintained that the writer had “invented” the episode of the 100,000 lire, without giving Saviano the right to reply. Feeling that he had been defamed, Saviano sued the RAI for 4,700,000 euros in damages.^[51]

Plagiarism dispute

In 2013 Saviano and the Arnoldo Mondadori Editore publishing house were sentenced for plagiarism on appeal.^[52] The Appeals Court of Naples recognized that some pages of *Gomorrhah* (0.6% of the entire book) were the results of an illicit reproduction of some lines from two articles from local daily papers, *Cronache di Napoli* and *Corriere di Caserta*.^[53] Therefore, it partially modified the sentence from the first-degree court in which the court had rejected the accusations made by the two newspapers and had, instead, condemned them to pay damages for having “abusively reproduced” two of Saviano's articles^[54] (this sentence was confirmed in the appeal).^[55] In the appeal, the writer and Mondadori were ordered to jointly pay reparations for property and other damages of 60 thousand euros plus a portion of legal costs.^[56] The writer appealed the ruling at the Court of Cassation, and the Supreme Court partially confirmed the sentence of the Appeals Court, but called for a reconsideration of the damages, evaluating 60 thousand euros to be an excessive sum for newspaper articles with a very limited readership.^[57] The Supreme Court did not agree with Saviano's appeal, rejecting almost all of the findings and largely confirming the basic structure of the Appeals Court's sentence.^[58]^[1] (<http://static.fanpage.it/wp-content/uploads/2015/06/sentenza-saviano-2016-plagio.pdf>)

In September 2015, journalist Michael C. Moynihan wrote an article for *The Daily Beast*,^[59] criticizing *ZeroZeroZero* and accusing Saviano of having used sections of text, including from Wikipedia, without citing his sources. In an article for the Italian newspaper *La Repubblica*,^{[60][61]} Saviano demonstrated how the passages from *ZeroZeroZero* and the presumed sources identified by Moynihan were manipulated in order to appear similar. The English newspaper *The Guardian*^[62] reported on the controversy with an article entitled “Roberto Saviano dismisses plagiarism claims over latest book” in which Saviano says, “I’m not a journalist (or a reporter), but, rather, a writer, and I recount real facts.” Saviano adds that “Interpretations and theories have a provenance, not mere facts: those belong to all, to those who recount them and to those who read them, making them their own”.

Among the various public personalities who have expressed their support of Roberto Saviano (Fabio Fazio, Gianni Riotta, Chiara Valerio, Francesca Borri, Stefano Piedimonte), the then editor in chief of *La Repubblica*, Ezio Mauro, appeared in a video on the paper's website on September 28, 2015,^[63] to give his contribution to the “Saviano case.” He repeated that “the facts of the news are available to all” and spoke about the “typical iconoclasm toward famous people who have constructed success and visibility based on their own hard work and studies.” He continued by saying, “Saviano is paying for having an enormous following and, above all, for the fact that he hasn't remained comfortably in cultural obscurity”.

Saviano on the Palmesano (a journalist who was fired by order of the Camorra) incident

Roberto Saviano was the first in Italy to take up the case of Enzo Palmesano, a journalist for the *Corriere di Caserta* (today called *Cronache di Caserta*) who was fired by order of the Camorra boss, Vincenzo Lubrano. The case was verified in court with a verdict^[64] against Francesco Cascella, nephew-by-marriage of the boss who acted as an intermediary between the clan and the then director of the paper, Gianluigi Guarino, in order to remove the journalist from his post.

The ruling declares that the clan influenced the editorial policy of the paper, which is published by Gruppo Libra, the same company that charged Saviano with plagiarism (see “Plagiarism dispute” above) after he criticized the editorial policy of some of their local newspapers on several occasions: at the Mantova *Festivaletteratura* in 2008, in a special for the television show *Che tempo che fa* on March 25, 2009, and in the book *La parola contro la camorra* (in 2010).

Journalist and television host, [Nadia Toffa](#), looked at the Palmesano case on the television program *OpenSpace*,^[65] interviewing Enzo Palmesano, Giovanni Conzo (the judge who oversaw the investigation), and Roberto Saviano.

Television

November 8–29, 2010, Roberto Saviano hosted the cultural program *Vieni via con me* (*Come Away with Me*) with [Fabio Fazio](#) on [Rai 3](#). The program had very successful ratings: the third episode was seen by 9,671,000 viewers, or 31.6% of the television audience that evening. The show covered themes such as organized crime (not only the Camorra), immigration, women’s emancipation, politics, and serious problems in Italian society. The program typically features the reading of “lists” with the goal of highlighting the issues addressed through a series of data. Numerous special guests appeared in the four episodes of the program.

Beginning on May 14, 2012, Saviano hosted the program *Quello che (non) ho* (*What I (don’t) have*),^[66] once again with Fabio Fazio. It aired on La7 and also streamed live on YouTube. The first episode was a record for La7 with 12.65% percentage of viewers, or 3,036,000 viewers, and was the third most-watched program of the evening.^[67] This record was surpassed two days later with the third and final episode of the program, which registered 13.06% of viewers.

Since October 4, 2017 Roberto Saviano has been conducting for four weeks the show *Kings of Crime* on the TV channel [Nove](#), where he speaks of the major Italian and international bosses of the organized crime system.^[68]

Awards and honors

- 2011 [PEN/Pinter Prize](#)
- 2011 [Olof Palme Prize](#) together with [Lydia Cacho](#).^[69]
- Bachelor's degree *honoris causa* in law - [University of Genoa](#), January 22, 2011
- On January 18, 2012, Roberto Saviano was named honorary citizen of Milan.^[70]
- The [International Astronomical Union](#) named asteroid [278447 “Saviano”](#) in honor of his merits as writer and journalist.^{[71][72]} On June 7, 2013, he officially received honorary citizenship of Florence from then mayor [Matteo Renzi](#).

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- Beauty and the Inferno: Essays*. Brooklyn, NY: Verso, 2012 ISBN [9781844679508](#)
- Zero Zero Zero*. Milano, Feltrinelli. 2013. ISBN [978-8807030536](#) (in Italian)
- Zero Zero Zero*. Penguin Press. 2015. ISBN [978-1594205507](#) (in English)

- *La paranza dei bambini* Milano, Feltrinelli. ISBN 9788807032073 (in Italian)

Music

- The British group Massive Attack created a track inspired by the story of Roberto Saviano and *Gomorra*. Called "*Herculaneum*," the track was featured in the soundtrack for the film *Gomorra*.
- The Neapolitan rapper, Lucariello, wrote a song called Cappotto di legno (Wooden Coat) with music by Ezio Bosso. Before writing the song, Lucariello received Saviano's approval for it because it tells the story of a killer who is preparing to kill Saviano.^[73]
- The group Subsonica, from Turin, dedicated their song Piombo from the album *L'eclissi* to the writer.
- The end of the track In Italia by rapper Fabri Fibra contains part of Enzo Biagi's interview of Roberto Saviano in which the writer states, "*One of my dreams was to remain in my own land, to recount it and to continue—how can I say it—to resist.*"
- The same rapper refers to Saviano in another one of his pieces. In the track Teoria e Pratica from the EP *Casus Belli*, he says, "Who would you like as president? Me, Saviano!"
- The song "TammorrAntiCamorra," or anti-Camorra tamurriata, from the album *Suburb* by the rap group 'A 67 contains the line "*smettiamo di essere Gomorra*" ("*let's quit being Gomorra*") and is dedicated to the priest don Giuseppe Diana, who was killed by the Camorra. During the song, Roberto Saviano reads a fragment of his book.
- During the huge U2 concert in Rome on October 8, 2010, the leader of U2, Bono Vox, mentioned Roberto Saviano two times and dedicated the group's famous song, *Sunday Bloody Sunday* to the writer. Saviano was at the concert and had met with the U2 front man before the show.
- Fabri Fibra cites Saviano and his book *Gomorra* once again in the track *Guerra e pace* (War and Peace) on the eponymous 2013 album.
- Clementino also cites Saviano in the song "Mea Culpa" on the album of the same name.
- Saviano is cited by the Sardinian rapper Salmo in the track *Nella pancia dello squalo* (In the stomach of the shark) on the album *The island* chainsaw massacre.
- The journalist is cited in the track *Perdona e dimentica* (Forgive and Forget) by I Cani. Saviano showed his appreciation for the one-man band, writing that his songs "are among the best stories of our country. Electronic anthropology."

The writer dedicated a section of his official site to music in the Galleries section.^[74]

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Translation: *Gomorra: A Personal Journey into the Violent International Empire of Naples' Organized Crime System*, Picador (2008) ISBN 978-0312427795

- *Zero Zero Zero*, Feltrinelli, (2013)

Translation: *Zero Zero Zero*, Penguin (2015)

- *La paranza dei bambini*, Mondadori, Milan, (2016)
- *Bacio feroce*, Mondadori, Milan, (2017)

- [La bambagia dei contumaci](#), [Mondadori](#), Milan, (2018)

Short stories

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Essays

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- [La parola contro la camorra](#), [Einaudi](#), Turin, 2010, published with DVD, [ISBN 978-88-06-20218-7](#)
- [Vieni via con me](#), [Feltrinelli](#), 2011, [ISBN 978-88-07-49110-8](#)

Audiobooks

- [Se questo è un uomo](#) (If This Is a Man) by [Primo Levi](#) read in Italian by Roberto Saviano, [Emons](#), Rome, 2013, [ISBN 978-88-95703-93-0](#)

Website

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Miscellaneous

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- *Preface to Andrea Pazienza's Astarte*, Rome, Fandango, 2010
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 - [Articles by Roberto Saviano published on Nazione Indiana](http://www.nazioneindiana.com/2006/08/27/articoli-di-roberto-saviano/) (<http://www.nazioneindiana.com/2006/08/27/articoli-di-roberto-saviano/>)
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